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ABSTRACT

A description is given of a faculty development program that is run by the faculty of the McCallie School, a private secondary school in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Three principles guide the program: (1) the quality of the educational program is the responsibility of the entire school community; (2) faculty that shares the responsibility for the educational program is empowered to act: and (3) as the educational environment improves, a sense of community evolves within the school staff. Descriptions are given of several salient features of the development program: (1) a mentor program, which is the central component of faculty development; (2) a faculty roundtable which allows individual teachers to call a one hour meeting of the faculty on any issue of concern; (3) faculty members participate in interviews of all incoming teachers and determine who will be hired; (4) a monthly newsletter to which any member of the school community can submit an article; (5) frequent formal and/or informal inter-visitation between classrooms; and (6) development of a common pedagogical vocabulary. (JD)

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Faculty Development From The Bottom Up: Analysis Of The Six Year Experience Of A Faculty-Run Faculty Development Program At the McCallie School In Chattanooga, Tennessee

by
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Any successful faculty development program must have the support and cooperation of the faculty. Of course, development programs can be imposed "from above", the products of school system's central offices or from the headmaster, but programs that are guided "from below" are much more responsive to the ever changing needs of a particular faculty. More importantly, faculty-run development programs require a greater investment from that faculty. Training sessions "from below" require more production time than an off-the-shelf version presented by a guest lecturer from a local university or state office. Workshops generated from within the faculty are more likely to address issues specific to that particular institution. They encourage scholarship among the presenters and tend to insure quality performances. Few teachers wish to engineer their own public failure.

With this in mind, the faculty at the McCallie School has participated in a faculty development program since 1983 and has been responsible for its operation since 1986. This has been an evolutionary process and by no means has the process of change ended. However, throughout the numerous adaptations made in the program the McCallie faculty has held fast to three foundational principles which have served as both philosophical guideposts and catalysts for growth among the faculty and within the institution. For the sake of clarity, these will be dealt with separately but it should be noted that, in reality, each is a part of a dynamic system and no single tenet can be effectively isolated and enacted without the other two.

"The quality of the educational program is the responsibilty of the entire school community." While this may not seem a revolutionary idea at first glance, when examined closely its implications for any school are far-reaching. First, it tends to eliminate the usual animosity between faculty and administration. Both have the same goals in mind even if they tend to see the institution from different points of view. Once faculty and administration acknowledge that both intend to provide the best educational experience for the students of the school, areas of agreement become more obvious. As both work to achieve that goal, increasingly made aware of similarities of purpose, the tendency to divide the world into "Us" and "Them" decreases. The pursuit of a quality program becomes the responsibility of individual teachers, not just princi-

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pals or heads of departments. Second, once the educational program becomes the top priority of the whole school community, time and energy that used to be diverted into dead end institutional conflicts can be channeled toward realizing gains in the classroom. With this influx of energy along with the accompanying attitudes, the entire learning environment is revitalized. Teachers that share the responsibility for the quality of the education that their school offers become partners rather than puppets and the effect is not lost on the student body. This transformation leads to the second key principle of McCallie's Faculty Development Program.

"A faculty that shares the responsibility for the educational program is empowered to act." Teacher empowerment under these circumstances takes two directions. Individuals within the school are empowered to act and effect a change in the interest of improving the learning environment. When teachers accept a share of the responsibility for the educational program one person can make a difference. That same individual is also empowered to direct and pursue his or her own professional growth and is, in fact, primarily responsible for that growth. The teaching community is also empowered to look within the institution and remove those obstacles that get in the way of effective education. It becomes the whole community's charge to ensure a quality education by setting standards and providing opportunities for professional development for each individual within the community. The empowerment of individual teachers and the whole faculty only occurs when they are included in shouldering the responsibilty for the educational program. Empowerment provides the impetus for the third key principle to emerge.

" Community evolves within the school staff as the educational environment improves." Isolation of the classroom teacher within his or her own classroom is a problem endemic to most educational programs across the country. In fact, in some studies, isolation has been shown to be the primary cause of teacher burn-out. A professional community evolves when individuals "own" the enterprise for which they work and are empowered to act on its behalf. Teachers begin to recieve meaningful feedback on their performance and are able to share their own wisdom with colleagues. The community comes to recognize that it possesses a kind of collective wisdom that is a resource for improving the learning environment and making institutional decisions. As a community develops it reinforces the idea that all of its members are responsible for the educational program and consequently energy is reinvested into the system.

Thus, these three key principles of shared responsibility, teacher empowerment, and community development are inseparable. Each is fed by the energy of the other two and no single one can stand on its own. The challenge is not, however, in

understanding how these three ideas fit together but in how they should be implemented. At McCallie, the prevailing notion has always been that effective faculty development must occur separately from the evaluation process. Eliminating any factors that might have personal financial impact frees teachers to act on issues that affect the educational program and allows the community to develop a sense of trust and openness. Having drawn this line, one major hindrance to implementation is effectively removed.

The McCallie School currently has ten offerings in its Faculty Development Program. Two exist specifically to enhance the quality of the educational experience for our students. The first of these is the Mentor Program, the central component of our approach to faculty development. In a nutshell, the Mentor Program exists to give teachers just entering the profession the opportunity to, as one mentor once stated "gain five years of teaching experience in two." The Mentor Program involves a commitment of two years for inexperienced teachers and one year for the more experienced. Participation in the Mentor Program involves monthly meetings for presentations on pedagogical techniques. It also includes at least one visit per month by a teacher's mentor. Second year teachers also visit other teachers monthly and are requested to view themselves on videotape. While the Mentor Program enhances the quality of the instructional process, the Individual In-Service allows teachers to design one in-service day per semester. In addition to the obvious benefits of release time to grow intellectually, the Individual In-Service also allows teachers to improve the content of the classes they teach by giving them the time to expand their knowledge of a particular topic. By providing ways for faculty to improve the content of their classes and the methods by which they present the content, we have taken what we believe is a significant step for insuring the quality of the educational program at McCallie.

There are many ways McCallie's program of development empowers teachers. For instance, the Faculty Development Steering Committee is elected by members of the current Mentor Program and makes decisions that determine the direction of the development program. Although only Mentor Program members vote, teachers from across the faculty work on the committee. This committee also serves a function of advocacy. For example, as a result of recent changes in the physical plant, space for faculty gatherings during the school day disappeared. The representatives of the Steering Committee have met with the headmaster about this need and efforts are being made to create the space.

The Faculty Roundtable provides another example of teacher empowerment. It allows individual teachers to call a one hour meeting of the faculty on any issue of

concern. The meetings are held in a convenient location at whatever time the requesting teacher desires. Publicity is posted and refreshments are available. The Roundtable begins with a five minute introduction by the requesting teacher and discussion often begins before the introduction ends . The only other responsibility that falls on the teacher who calls for a Roundtable is that he or she announces when an hour has transpired. All topics are open to discussion and all faculty are free to choose to attend or not attend. Our Saturday morning meetings have attracted between one-half and one-third of the faculty. Topics have ranged from minorities at McCallie to how committed we need to be to broaden the world view of our students, to the need to expand our efforts to encourage writing across the curriculum. Once a medium is created for an exchange of ideas, that exchange inevitably produces some result. Individual teachers are empowered to call meetings for issues that concern them. Individual teachers are also empowered to "vote with their feet" at to whether those issues hold any meaning for them.

The very idea of faculty empowerment has resulted in significant changes throughout the school. One faculty member serves on the executive committee. Faculty members also help conduct interviews for all incoming teachers and determine who will be hired. Sharing responsibility for the quality of the education program at McCallie has also produced a sharing of the power as well.

Obviously, all of these programs have the effect of indirectly building community, but some components exist specifically for that purpose. One way our program does this is through the publication of monthly newsletter. Any member of the school community can submit an article. All members receive a copy. Some articles are as mundane as parent comments about the summer program. Others are parodies of some recent well-known but poorly received decision affecting school operations and some attempt to confirm or deny rumors. It is a place to sometimes air dirty linen. The bulk of the newsletter, though, includes editorials, news items and conference reports. Whatever the nature of the articles, the obvious result is that the community is more informed about itself, reducing the feeling of isolation.

Inter-visitation is common at McCallie, too. One component of the development program is designed for just that purpose, Companion Teachers. In this component, two or more teachers commit to host and visit each other on a monthly basis. Many teachers who do not wish to commit to a semester-long program arrange visitations on a more informal basis. Exactly 2/3 of McCallie's faculty have completed at least one year of the Mentor Program which mandates monthly visits. The idea of inter-visitation has undergone a transformation in the past six years. In the early 1980's, whenever a visi-

tor sat in on class, it was almost always connected to contractual considerations. Visitations were to be endured because they were the only way to be rehired and make (or lose!) money in the next contract year. In 1988, teachers visit each other regularly and it is a rare week when at least one teacher does not visit another. New teachers, in particular, have shown the greatest change in attitude. Inexperienced in the classroom, they were reluctant to expose weaknesses. Now, new teachers often seek out another teacher, describe an incident or set of circumstances and ask for a visit. Clearly, this has helped to eliminate classroom isolation and build community.

As evidence of McCallie's evolution as a professional community, a common pedagogical vocabulary has developed. With such a high degree of faculty involvement in the Mentor Program and with its focus on instructional technique, it is inevitable that words like "wait time", "set induction" and "modelling" have become a part of the lexicon of classroom teachers. An American History instructor may not know the content of a calculus class but he or she will be able to comment on the distribution of questions or the nature of the teacher's feedback if both understand these concepts. Common vocabulary also helps end classroom isolation by allowing teachers from different disciplines visit one another and share insights.

Of course, not all the stories have happy endings. Limits are tested. Following a more a conservative path might make the traveling a bit easier. Letters appear in the newsletter and feathers get ruffled. And in spite of everyone's best efforts, bad decisions are made. Still, a system of faculty development that is non-evaluative in nature and takes to heart the idea that the quality of the educational program is the responsibility of the entire school community is bound to produce an empowered school/community that is concerned about the humanity of its members as much as it is about its programmatic goals.